UNITED
NATIONS

S

Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/23507
3 February 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 30 JANUARY 1992 FROM THE CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF SOMALIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Pursuant to my letter of 20 January 1992 (S/23445), I should like to express, at the outset, my gratitude to you and the members of the Security Council for your decision to consider the problem of the worsening political and security situation in my country. I wish to express my deep gratification with the unanimous adoption by the Council of resolution 733 (1992) whose recommendations I highly appreciate. I sincerely hope that it will have the intended effect of diminishing human suffering, a holding cease-fire, an effective national reconciliation and lasting peace in my country. In this spirit, I feel encouraged, indeed obliged, to present to you the following paragraphs in an attempt to highlight the material facts of the situation, as I see them today, with a view to enabling the Council to reach in their light, a final approach to the problem. I would therefore be grateful if the attached document were circulated in its entirety as a document of the Security Council.

I sincerely hope that you and the Council will find this document both informative and constructive. I have tried to the best of my ability to be objective although, as a Somali, I am emotionally affected - and ashamed - by what is happening in my country. My sole purpose in submitting the document is to help my country and my people of all clans and factions.

(Signed) Fatun Mohammed HASSAN
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

Annex

Approaches to the problems of Somalia

Ever since the last thread of central authority in Somalia was broken one full year ago by the onslaught of the United Somali Congress (USC) on the national capital, Mogadishu, anarchy has reigned and the long national strife against President Mohammed Siad Barre and his regime was transformed overnight into an internecine inter-clan struggle for power and supremacy. The reasons for this are not difficult to understand: first, all those groups (whatever they may call themselves, USC, SPM, SSDF, etc.) who were fighting to overthrow the Barre regime were, as they still are today, purely clan-based; secondly, they were remotely united only in their ephemeral purpose of bringing to an end the long rule of an unpopular regime, and that semblance of unity disappeared with the disappearance of that regime; thirdly, their respective aspirations were, like their respective composition, tribal rather than national; fourthly, there were hardly any neutral elements in the country itself to mediate in order to bring these bloody conflicts to a quick end; finally, the eyes of the international community were focused elsewhere and my poor countrymen were left to their own devices. Sadly, however, they did not have any devices of their own except self-destruction.

I am not going to dwell on the barbarous atrocities which my countrymen in Mogadishu have so senselessly been perpetrating on each other. The grisly details of those atrocities in our hapless national capital have been graphically presented in the mass media by news correspondents. But the situation in the national capital has given a totally erroneous picture of the country as a whole; for the fact is that, although in Mogadishu the faculty of emotion has prevailed over and suppressed that of reason in the heat of the fighting, the people in other regions of Somalia have actually organized themselves under the banner of their own respective political factions and have formed ad hoc regional administrations with responsibilities for maintaining law and order, providing essential though minimum services, and regulating economic activities. Few of us know that these regional administrations exist; that schools and hospitals (although ill-provided for) are open; and that even one newspaper at least is published in every major provincial city. All these have been eclipsed by the chaos in Mogadishu which is perpetuating a human tragedy of massive proportions. This does not mean that there are no breaches of the peace in the regions outside Mogadishu. There have certainly been incidents and occasional violent outbursts between sections of even the same sub-clan; there has been some fighting recently, for example, in Berbera, Burao, Bossasso, Erigavo, and Kismayo and there have been violent incidents which have caused the death of aid workers and United Nations staff. That is so because the regional administrations are weak in terms of resources and do not monopolize the possession of weapons which would enable them to maintain order.

The overall situation is not therefore totally hopeless as painted in the various reports and it would be wrong on the part of the international

community to hold the entire Somali nation hostage to the whims of two opposing wings of a faction which are playing havoc in Mogadishu with the lives of defenceless women and children. I submit to the Council, that a solution to my country's tragedy, albeit a difficult undertaking, is not so elusive as some of us might think but is in fact within reach of the international community. However, before we explore further, the best possible solution to a seemingly impossible situation, I should like to share with you my own assessment of the current realities of the situation.

I have already mentioned that the tragic events in Mogadishu do not mirror what is happening in the rest of the country. The distinction between the two situations is useful to any approach to the problems. It is vitally important that the Council realize that all political entities in Somalia are the clans themselves and such deceptive labels as USC, SSDF, SPM, SNM, etc., are only masks designed to give a modern face to clan politics. Consequently, each of these groups is controlling only the geographic area which is the traditional home of its clan. Hence, the absence of any national or even inter-clan political organization which can legitimately claim to have the right to form a national government. For example, the USC considers Mogadishu to be its own, lock, stock and barrel for the mere reason that it lies within the clan's territorial boundary. They have, as a result, driven out everybody else. So, those others who wish to return to Mogadishu when all is done and the dust has settled must do so as guests, and only on USC terms.

Despite the fact that Somalia is torn to pieces by the current civil strife, the underlying reality is that the Somalis are one indivisible people sharing one language, one religion, one culture and a very high degree of racial homogeneity. The war does not make them less homogeneous than they were before. Furthermore, no clan has ever denied its being Somali and all political factions despite their differences are still using the word "Somali" as an integral part of their respective appellations; for example, Somali National Movement (SNM), United Somali Congress (USC), Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF), Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM) and so on. The SNM has declared the secession of the five northern regions in spite of the fact that it draws its support exclusively from two of these regions. That decision was, as admitted by the SNM itself, made on the spur of the moment and only on the basis of the popular clamour of the people of Burao. But it runs counter to SNM's previously declared policy of keeping national unity, and there was no referendum of any kind. Any fissiparous tendency can also be remedied in the context of establishing good and responsible government for the whole of Somalia which will, through devolution, give all the clans a sense of belonging. The Somali nation cannot simply be artificially partitioned along the lines of erstwhile colonial boundaries which served only the interests of metropolitan powers, and the respective ill-feelings of Somalis towards one another cannot alter the basic fact of their consanguinity. Keeping our nation intact is a duty we owe to posterity and we shall not waiver in that duty.

Allow me now to move on to the more difficult area of solutions. There are those who contend, not without justification I am afraid, that Somalia was

neglected by the powerful members of the international community because it had lost its strategic value as a result of changes in the arena of international politics, or because of its being African. I would like to believe that the Security Council is motivated more by its concern for human life and dignity than by the selfish political and strategic interests of its members. But, whatever the reasons may be, the fact remains that my country has not been fortunate enough to receive any international political assistance to end its protracted crisis. And whatever medical and relief assistance that was given to the country was ineffective partly because the security situation did not permit optimal distribution, partly because it was concentrated in few areas and partly because it represented but a trifle of the total requirements of the disaffected population. We are, nevertheless, very, very grateful for those who supplied the assistance as well as those who endangered their own lives to help our people.

The effectiveness of any relief or medical assistance is, by and large, contingent upon finding a viable solution to the political problems which are manifesting themselves as security problems. It is my considered view that a two-pronged approach be adopted. On the one hand every effort should be made to ensure that there is a holding cease-fire which, if necessary, should be maintained by coercive means. On the other hand, a national reconciliation conference should be arranged under the auspices of the Security Council. It is absolutely imperative that the United Nations should throw its considerable weight and prestige behind efforts towards that conference, bearing in mind that the Arab League and individual Governments which are friends of Somalia, but are more resourceful than the Organization of African Unity (OAU), have tried several times without avail. However, such a conference should avoid the pitfalls of the previous Somali National Reconciliation Conference which was held in Djibouti in July 1991. That conference failed mainly because it was not truly representative and because of deep internal divisions within the USC which had taken over the capital city. As to the declared secession of the SNM, the most obvious thing to do is to reinforce the positions of the OAU, the Arab League and the Organization of the Islamic Conference in condemning it in no uncertain terms and thereby uphold the unity of the Somali nation. Any separatist group must, in addition, face the threat of sanctions. If this is done, and a government of national unity is formed, I am sure the SNM will sooner than later see the wisdom of joining hands with their brothers and sisters.

However, there are two essential prerequisites that should be fulfilled if the approach along the lines I have humbly indicated is to succeed. The first is to overcome the barrier of communication between the different factions. Granted that they are not on speaking terms at present, but the fact that they are all tired of this interminable situation augurs well for concerted and unrelenting international efforts to bring them together. The second is that there must be a strong will on the part of the international community to exert and maintain pressure on any party which refuses reconciliation.

In conclusion, let me assure the Council that any measures - even if coercive - to resolve the current crisis in Somalia cannot and will not be interpreted as interference in our internal affairs since their effect will be the saving of human lives and the restoration of human dignity. The situation cries out for the help of the United Nations and particularly the Security Council. The Somali people are bewildered by what they see as the callous indifference of the international community, but their eyes are nevertheless focused on the United Nations. They are pleading with you to stop the bleeding of their country. Please help by acting now.